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Eugenics: Dissenting Voices of the Past

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It will be our duty, therefore, as their lawgiver, to select the women just as you selected the men, and to place them together, taking care, as far as possible, that they shall be of similar nature. . . .

[I]rregular alliances, or indeed irregularity of any kind, would be a profanation among the members of a happy city, and will not be permitted by the magistrates.
And rightly so.

Manifestly then our next care will be to make the marriage-union as sacred a thing as we possibly can: and this sanctity will attach to the marriages which are most for the public good.
Precisely so.

Tell me, Glaucon, how this end is to be attained. For I know you keep both sporting dogs and a great number of game birds. I conjure you, therefore, to inform me whether you have paid any attention to the intercourse and the breeding of these animals.
In what respect?
In the first place, though all are well-bred, are there not some which are, or grow to be, superior to the rest?
There are.
Do you breed from all alike, or are you anxious to breed as much as possible from the best?
From the best. . . .

And if you were to pursue a different course, do you think your breed of birds and dogs would degenerate very much?
I do.
Do you think it would be different with horses or any other animals?
Certainly not; it would be absurd to suppose it.

Good heavens! my dear friend, I exclaimed, what very first-rate men our rulers ought to be, if the analogy hold with regard to the human race.
Well, it certainly does: but why first-rate?

Because they will be obliged to use medicine to a great extent. Now you know when invalids do not require medicine, but are willing to submit to a regimen, we think an ordinary doctor good enough for them; but when it is necessary to administer medicines, we know that a more able physician must be called in.
True; but how does this apply?

Thus. It is probable that our rulers will be compelled to have recourse to a good deal of falsehood and deceit for the benefit of their subjects. And, if you recollect, we said that all such practices were useful in the character of medicine.
Yes, and we were right.

Well then, it appears that this right principle applies particularly to the questions of marriage and propagation.
How so?

It follows from what has been already granted, that the best of both sexes ought to be brought together as often as possible, and the worst as seldom as possible, and that the issue of the former unions ought to be reared, and that of the later abandoned, if the flock is to attain to first-rate excellence; and these proceedings ought to be kept a secret from all but the magistrates themselves, ... (The Republic of Plato, Davies and Vaughan trans. V § 458-60)

The above exchange between Socrates and Glaucon is perhaps the first written example of eugenics discourse in the Western tradition. Though the term "eugenics" did not enter the English language until Francis Galton coined it in 1883,[1] I think that it can be well argued that all subsequent eugenic discourse hinges on this passage from *The Republic*. Galton and the advocates of eugenics, whether consciously or unconsciously, took Plato seriously and based many of their ideas on his work. This exchange between Socrates and Glaucon was, however, problematic for many who spoke out against eugenics ideals and practice during the twentieth century. The ideas put forth in it, and in *The Republic* as a whole, are, for these period dissenters, based on two faulty assumptions: First, that the ruling class of "lawgivers" know what is best for the "the public good," and second, the alienation of personal liberty by that ruling class is good for the public. Moreover, as logical sounding as Plato constructs it, this dialectic demonstrates two major fallacies, each based on a false premise: that of the ability of humans to breed perfection in themselves, and that of the outcome of such breeding would in fact be for the public good. Much of the discourse of historic public dissent to eugenics is based on proving these two assumptions wrong. But even more troubling than the aforementioned fallacious assumptions is the secrecy Plato suggests necessary to keep the common citizen from knowing the eugenic affronts to democracy by those in power: "these proceedings ought to be kept a secret from all but the magistrates themselves" (Republic, Bk. V, Sec. 460). In Plato's utopian Republic, individual knowledge of "these practices" would be allowed only for the rulers. Only the magistrates are to know the machinery of eugenics in practice. Public knowledge would threaten chaos in the Republic. It is this public knowledge, constructed by public discourse, which eventually exposed the faulty premises of eugenics. At least for a time. It seems eugenics ideals and the assumptions behind them have never been totally laid to rest.

Much has been said about eugenics in the last 100-plus years, much of it negative since Hitler's Third Reich. The topic has come up again with the development of the Genome Project. In looking at some of the recent works on the history of eugenics in the United States, especially while reading Martin S. Pernick's investigative nonfiction work *The Black Stork:Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures Since 1915* (1996). I began to wonder who in the public discourse on the subject spoke in opposition in the years preceding National Socialism. What was the language of this opposition? From what ideologies, theories, and disciplines did these voices speak? How were the arguments against framed? Pernick offered me a starting point by identifying eugenic dissenters in his book, though he did not go into detail about them. So, I began to dig to uncover those voices of the past.

In this essay I intend to look at those opposing voices to the eugenics movement from the earliest voice my research uncovered in 1907, through 1916. I would like to go further, at least through the period of The Great War to its conclusion in 1918, but the constraints of time and length of essay would not do justice to the material covered. In the first section I will set the literary tone of the time. I will then examine in chronological order a group of the earliest dissenting opinions on eugenics that I could find to trace possible changes in the language and discourse of eugenics dissent, as those opinions are manifest in magazines and scholarly journals of the period. I will also include some newspaper articles that report on legal actions taken or threatened against doctors who made public their eugenic practices.

I am not, for the purposes of this essay, looking for the voices of those professors of eugenic ideals. There is more than enough published that present their views. Nor will I be comparing pro verses con arguments; I will instead be looking exclusively at the opposition voices and letting them frame and discuss/dispute the issues as they see them on their own terms. Moreover, I will not be looking at current voices of opposition e.g., those of Pernick and others, but the voices of the past these authors have cited.

During the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the American public saw a chain of problems associated with ever-expanding populations caused by migration from rural areas to urban centers and immigration during the Industrial Revolution — and the resulting overpopulation of cities, of poverty, disease, and urban blight. It seemed to many at the time, those who looked at society as a whole, that America was undergoing social entropy. Victorian authors, Dickens et al., showed to the American public and the world the social evils of industrialization.

The literary realism of Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861) and William Dean Howells's *A Modern Instance* (1882) depicted the dark side of industrial development and migration of people from agrarian to city life, as did American Naturalism in literary works such as Steven Crane's novella *Maggie Girl of the Streets* (1893) and Edith Wharton's novel *House of Mirth* (1905).

The social concerns raised by these literary works were nothing new to the American public. They were experiencing social entropy first hand, especially in large metropolitan cities. They had private knowledge, but with the voices of authors like Davis, Howells, Crane, Wharton, and many others that knowledge was made public. The knowledge of social decline was articulated; out there, as Steven Pinker uses the term, and once spoken could not be unspoken. Eugenics seemed a link to bring the ends of the chain together as the scientific savior of the human race. Eugenics was universally accepted and perhaps the first social movement to bridge academic and scientific disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, medicine, and even theology. Many saw eugenics as the rational solution to a universally perceived dilemma — social entropy.

With knowledge of the social ills brought on by industrialization comes the need for remedy.[2] As Plato states of the lawgivers in the above epigraph, "*they will be obliged to use medicine to a great extent*," and who better to provide the eugenic remedy than the physician? Doctors for millennia have been making eugenic choices in medical practice during or shortly after delivery of newborns. Many would not treat the severely disabled or mentally damaged newborns, some even practiced a form of infanticide by assisting death via drugs (pharmakon), but these practices were not made public (Pernick 4). The American medical establishment has always demanded silence from its practitioners and distrusted public knowledge of medical treatments, especially in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, *"and these proceedings ought to be kept a secret from all but the magistrates themselves"* (Socrates in epigraph). Perhaps these modern magistrates of the medical profession were reticent to make their eugenically theorized practices known to protect their hegemony as purveyors of expertise. Private knowledge, that known by the professionals of eugenics in practice, i.e., withholding treatment, involuntary sterilization, and euthanasia cause no problems for the medical profession. But what if the knowledge of eugenic practices were made public? The outcry would be extreme. After all, these are matters for the experts; the public would simply not understand, and who needs the public backlash that might ensue.

Support from the medical establishment notwithstanding, some physicians did object to eugenic practice. The earliest voice in objection to eugenics that I could find comes from Robert Brudenell Carter, ophthalmic surgeon at St. George Hospital, London. Carter takes on Galton and eugenic theory in "Eugenics and Descent," first published in the literary *CornhillMagazine* (1860-1975) and reprinted in *TheEclectic Magazine* (1907). By that time, eugenics was on the legal fast track for the public good. Plato would have been on board, proud that the magistrates of the modern medical establishment and lawgivers had heard his ancient voice. That same year, 1907, Indiana became the first state to enact eugenic sterilization legislation.[3]

While granting some credence to the eugenic possibility that intelligence and physical prowess could be hereditary, Carter takes up the first of the aforementioned fallacies, that of false premise, i.e. "the ability of humans to breed perfection in themselves" (see above, 2). He cautions that as the exact pairings of an individual's parents are unknown beyond a couple of generations; and as the exact traits of those distant relatives are unknown; and as some radically different traits of unknown origin popup in families; and as some traits Lamarkian in origin, i.e., postnatal traits environmental in origin seem to skip generations, e.g. thriftiness; and as the mechanism and diversity of traits in humans are unknown, eugenicists would be hard pressed to produce predictable results through artificial selection. In the words of Carter:

> It is not uncommon to find, in the same family, children differing widely from one another in physique, in temperament, in capacity, or in all three; and, so long as no one can explain such differences among the children of the same parents, the fact that they arise shows the impossibility of predicting the results of any marriage, or of selecting a husband or a wife in order that any desired result may be produced. (428)

Carter also takes up the social realities of life for children at the top of the economic food chain. He argues that the assumption that the children of "the prosperous classes" are not hindered by being of the upper class (425), "insomuch that the children of the wealthy seem to be hindered, rather than assisted, by the very circumstances which might appear likely to be sources of advantage to them" (425).[4] He presages the Peter Principle in the next paragraph:

> Our social system [he is talking about England here] has been described by an American observer as an elaborate machinery for putting inferior people into positions of prominence and responsibility; and I think, it must be admitted that those who are advanced by its agency do not invariably display any special fitness for the duties and responsibilities imposed up them. (425)

Carter's unnamed American makes a good argument against a system of social promotion that leads to rising to the level of one's incompetence, and staying there. Carter is using this American voice to further comments on the efficacy of basic eugenic principles, i.e., classism.

In his final paragraph, Carter calls attention to Galton's words, and I call attention to how closely Galton's words resemble Plato as spoken through Socrates in the above epigraph: "I gather from his [Galton's] writings that he thinks it possible to bring about a progressive improvement of the human race by selection in marriage, and also that he looks forward to a future when such selection 'will be required by the national conscience, and will become an orthodox religious tenet'" (428). In the ancient words of Plato: "*Manifestly then our next care will be to make the marriage-union as sacred a thing as we possibly can: and this sanctity will attach to the marriages which are most for the public good*" (epigraph above).

In the quotation Carter gives us, Galton performs a rhetorical turning of the (pseudo)science of eugenics in an effort to tune in to the religious ideals of the public. Galton does, however, stop short of calling for magisterial marriage panels as Plato calls for — "selection 'will be required by the national conscience'" does not rise to the level of *dictum cubiculum*[5] legislation, but does leave open a legislative door to the bedroom.

As Carter does in his essay, the unnamed author of "The Four Great Problems of Eugenics," a short article published in volume 52 of *Current Literature* (1912), stresses concerns about the efficacy of eugenics in practice. He forwards Carter's project by suggesting that four "fundamental questions await the great gathering of workers in the new science of eugenics" (664). This "great gathering" of eugenic workers he refers to was the first International Eugenics Congress (IEG) to be held in London in 1912 (see fig. 1). First, that the problem of Lamarckian evolution, i.e. post-natal, non-congenitally acquired traits are or can be passed on to offspring, must be proven true or false.

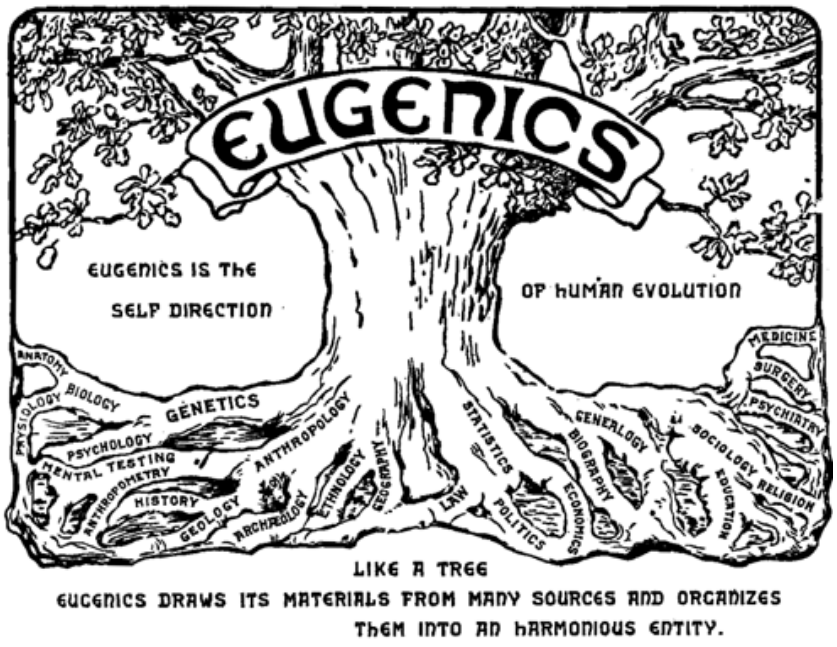

Fig. 1. Logo of the Second International Eugenics Congress (1921). Google Images. Web. 10 Mar. 2012.

Second, as most eugenists at the time believed Lamarck had it wrong about the hereditability of acquired traits, what accounts for spontaneous variations "which appear at birth or are clearly proved to be innate and not due to a special action of the environment on the individual" (665)? The unnamed author of this article cites Darwin, who, in his opinion, has been ignored by eugenists of the day: "Darwin states that variability is induced . . . by the indirect action of changed conditions upon the reproductive system [sic] of the parents — the germs and the sperms" (665).

In other words something akin to mutation (mutation is discussed by another author opposed to eugenic theory later in this essay) has happened to what would later become known as the genes of one or both of the parents, not merely that a change in the environment of the parent or parents. Even if of environmental origin, a mutation of one or more genes is necessary for the change to manifest as a heritable trait.

Third, why is it that the breeding of opposing characteristics, e.g. smooth and wrinkled surfaces in peapods, does not always produce a blending, but a breeding out after a few generations "as two pure races . . .. In other cases . . . a blending of the characters of the parents occurs" (665)? The author of this article is suggesting that application of genetic principles to human beings will not produce predictable effects, as did Carter.

The fourth question concerns the foundation and reliability of statistics regarding human variation. Are the statistics of the "biometricians, as the inquirers in this matter call themselves" (665), founded on and factually related to the heritable transmissibility of the traits themselves, or are the interpretation of statistics resulting in a fallacy of ignoring a common cause? That is, A happens then B happens; therefore, A caused B. But what if the actual cause for B is the ignored C factor? The devil is in the details. Also, according to this author, and Carter before him or her, there just are not enough details to determine heritability of specific traits given the extremes of human diversity. Again, this author has focused his dissent on the efficacy of eugenic ideals in practice.

Another voice of opposition to eugenics from one who calls himself (assuming male gender) "Individualist," in another short article entitled "The Menace of Eugenics,"[6] takes up the conversation shortly after the first IEC of 1912 — "the great gathering" — of which the previous author spoke. Individualist's article was originally published in *The Outlook* (1912), and was selected for reprint by Eliakim Littell, editor of *The Living Age*, volume 274 (1912).

The title of this piece lends tone and perspective to the Individualist's project. From the first line to the last, Individualist takes up the second faulty assumption (see above, 2): "the alienation of personal liberty by that ruling class is good for the public," and warns of the dangers to individual liberty the eugenics movement threatens. While first conceding some possible good from eugenic study, as did Carter, the author presages the eugenically theorized extremes of the Third Reich two decades later: "There is so much in the Eugenic propaganda which is unquestionably good that the immense evil it may impose upon the world is to a great extent overlooked by those who are easily dazzled by fair promises, good intentions, and an extensive biological vocabulary" (629).

Individualist makes the claim that the eugenics movement whose "arguments by which it is sought to secure our approval of measures which, if explained to each of us clearly and bluntly, we should repudiate without a moment's hesitation" (629), which speaks to Plato's call for secrecy that"*these proceedings ought to be kept a secret from all but the magistrates themselves*" (epigraph). Individualist calls the "proposals for breeding a perfect race" an "inquisition to be held . . . by self-appointed inquisitors obsessed with the dubious theories of an infant science" (629). These inquisitors (magistrates in Plato's language) would judge who was fit or unfit and thereby label those respectively, placing a brand on the individual — an institutional, state-sanctioned brand of class — a milder version of the hot-iron brand seared into flesh of human chattel by the slave owner in times past, but a brand nonetheless. In the name of the common good, of social human advancement, of democratic socialism, men and women of science along with clergy, Protestant and Catholic, as well as presidents of the United States, both liberal and conservative, promoted a system of eugenic measures that if spoken of "[u]ndisguised . . . would perish summarily of its own unsightliness" (629). Strong words.

Individualist then echoes Carter once more as well as our previous unnamed author by taking up the question of eugenic efficacy and the first faulty assumption mentioned above (see above, 2), i.e. that the ruling class of "lawgivers" know what is best for the "the public good." He examines the foundations of what he calls the "pseudo-science" of eugenics, one tenant of which is the domestication of man. He paraphrases James Arthur Balfour[7] who spoke at the opening banquet of the first IEC, of which Individualist must have been an attendee: "Mr. Balfour, in his brilliant speech at the banquet . . ., said truly that, broadly speaking, man was a wild animal. And hinted that the time had arrived for his domestication" (629).

Individualist asks, domesticated by whom? "For whose use is man to be domesticated? Practically it is proposed that the community is to domesticate the community for the good of the community." He goes on to suggest that Karl Marx himself would never have suggested anything so preposterous.

Individualist then takes up an argument that will be repeated later by Franz Boas that the domestication of animals has never been done with the aim to breed animals better suited to their natural environment, but to the uses of man. Comparing humans to animals, which traits are we to breed for? "Are we to breed men in classes — the strong for manual work, the wise for government, the beautiful for leisured ease?" Plato would say, of course we should, just don't let the public know you are doing it.

The professors of eugenics would respond to Individualist that they only want to breed out the degenerates, the unfit; the criminal, the feeble-minded, and the like. But many of the "children of the degenerates" have become healthy and useful citizens as well as great social icons. The father of Edward I was feebleminded, and his father before him "a criminal of a peculiarly bad type" (Individualist 630). Keats is another example, as consumptives were considered to have contracted the disease because of faulty heritage (an essential condition), rather than social conditions (an existential effect). It is far more useful, according to Individualist and many others, to concentrate on the environmental conditions of childrearing than it is to looking for answers in "germ-plasm of which we know little, and perhaps even that little wrongly" (629). The forgoing is a strong argument by the dissenters as a group: The professors of eugenics inherently see social effects as essential conditions. They look to the physical to explain away the social.

I like Individualist. I fancy myself saying the same thing in context of pre- and post-IEC discourse circa 1912. Remember, the writings of Individualist post IEC and the unnamed author of the previous article are writing decades before the National Socialist extremes of the thirties. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. I reluctantly leave Individualist on his last sentence, which voices my own: "I, for one, would gladly risk natural degeneration rather than be involved in an unnatural degeneration so monstrous" (631).

One year after the first IEC in London, the Reverend J. Parton Milum wrote "The Fallacy of Eugenics" (1913), printed in *The London Quarterly Review*. Milum begins with a short snippet of a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon from *Plato's Republic*. While reading this article I vaguely remembered this bit of dialogue, so I dug out a copy of *Plato's Republic* and searched for the context of this particular section of discourse on breeding humanity for the public good (*The Republic*, V § 459). I looked at the language before and after the section quoted by Milum and found the connections these voices of eugenics opposition were making to that text and to each other. It dawned on me that these men were talking back and forth, responding to each other in print, furthering each other's arguments about the very principles of the eugenics, as outlined by Plato, considered to be foundations of that pseudoscience.

Milum argues that eugenics, being based on the Darwin's theory of evolution, incorrectly assumes that the human race can, as Plato proposes, be controlled and bred to avoid degeneration. He states the case via syllogism for eugenic artificial selection based on Darwin's Natural Selection: "Since there is a struggle for existence, and since no two creatures are alike, the fittest must tend to survive. Given limitless time, but a limitation of subsistence, Nature will weed out those individuals less fitted for their environment" (463). Milum argues that this syllogism is fallacious. He cites the work of Dutch Professor De Vries, a botanist who proposed the idea of mutation to explain sudden changes of plants that become hereditable: De Vries's Mutation Theory. Mutations have been recognized and explained away as Lamarckian traits developed in individuals that become transmissible to their offspring. Milum doesn't comment on Lamarck or his theory, but does question the vast amount of time Darwin's theory requires for such changes to take place strictly through the process of evolution.

The human animal has not changed significantly since the last ice age: "By that momentous mutation that occurred some while before, the Great Ice Age Man arrived. That skull of his was as capacious as it now is. There, without further changes in physique, were the promise and potency of the man that is to be" (466). One would expect that in 12,000-plus years in which to evolve, some physical change would be evident in the human physique, but there is no evident change.

Along with physical evolution, Milum discusses how the seemingly obvious conclusions of eugenic theory effect the assumption that the same will work for human social evolution: "So inevitable does this corollary seem, and so overwhelming its logic, that clear-brained reformers are being carried off their feet" (464).

Milum thus paraphrases George Bernard Shaw (a Fabian Socialist and ardent supporter of eugenics) from the preface of Shaw's *Man and Superman* (1903): "that he [Shaw] at least no longer entertains any delusions as to social reform. The only hope for man is to breed him" (464). But Milum again sees Plato's major fallacy in the words of Shaw, i.e., the conflating of theories of physical and social evolution. In his analysis, Milum carries the discourse of eugenics dissent into new territory — the social landscape:

> What commonly goes by the name of "social evolution" is not the evolution of man as a biological species, but the evolution of human institutions, such as man's increasing power over nature through his inventions of new tools, and the moulding [sic] of his environment by changes in the social system both consciously and unconsciously produced. This analysis gives a clear grasp of two rival conceptions as to *the meaning of human progress* [ital. in orig.]. To the eugenists progress consists of changes embodied in the human material itself — he would say more complex nervous matter chiefly; to the socialist progress consists in the elaboration of such conditions that the intrinsic individuality of all members of society shall have opportunity of realization and unfold its innate powers. (466)

Shaw may have been willing to give up on social reform, but Milum was not. The early eugenists assumed that the social and cultural differences they saw in classes and cultures were genetically essential to them and not simply due to "a measure ofelasticity" (465) made manifest in specific existential sociocultural conditions. Again, the assumption of eugenists is that the existential, societal, effects of economic struggle are due to essential, physical, conditions.

Milum does see the usefulness of economic social struggle, however. As a clergyman, the Reverend J. Parton Milum, without explicitly saying so sees the divine hand involved in the social progression of humanity. Counter to the Malthusian ideas of struggle for existence, Milum tells us, "the struggle for existence *has not created* [ital. in orig.] the human species, the abrogation of the struggle cannot uncreate it" (467). By using italics to stress the word "create" in the past perfect tense, he may be said to allude to God as the creator who manifests a design for humanity through the process of social evolution. For Milum, the struggle is not the process that creates; the underlying conditions that cause struggle are what degrade. It is the overcoming of struggle through social and material progress that creates a truly democratic uplift in the existential condition of humanity:

> The parasitism of man upon man has been the main cause of such degeneracy as exists, a cause which the eugenist is likely to ignore. But from Plato until to-day [sic] the defense of aristocracy has been the assertion that it possesses certain innate racial differences, in short, that it is better born. . . . Thus it appears that just in this era which beholds a world-wide democracy coming to self-consciousness, preliminary to the final overthrow of human parasitism, however veiled its form, the eugenists are elaborating the last defense of class distinctions, representing them as resting on innate superiority. (468)

The foregoing statements by Milum are the earliest I've seen that expose the eugenists as they were at the time, as classist and racist, even though the term racist did not enter the English language for another fourteen years.[8]

For Milum, countering the Malthusian idea that overproduction leads to starvation, it is the elimination of aristocratic views which lead to human parasitism, along with material progress brought about by innovation and industrialization of the means of production that will bring a true democracy: "With the resources of machinery the necessities of life might even now be increased to any amount" (467). Milum is an optimist.

It is Milum's egalitarian take on the essence of humanity and his optimism that I admire. He sees "man as an end in himself, and not as in our present social system a mere means for producing material wealth" (468) to be exploited by an aristocracy, a ruling class. Milum here sounds like progressive Christian clergyman, almost a socialist. I'd like to share Milum's optimism. But when I read the words of Malthus, or the words of anthropologists such as René Gerard from *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre* (a conversational examination of violence in culture through the lens of anthropology), and look around, when I look at the images of worldwide struggle broadcast incessantly, I must ask: are we now reaching the limits of Milum's optimism? Can the world's entire population continue to breed freely and still produce enough for subsistence, let alone progress? And what is progress in this regard? What would Milum say in response to one day's news broadcasts?

Voices of dissent in the early twentieth century also came from some of Plato's "magistrates" themselves, but not in the way these others voice their dissent. Even though most medical professionals followed closely Socrates' advice that eugenic "*proceedings ought to be kept a secret from all but the magistrates themselves*" (epigraph), onedoctor did go public with his eugenic practice, and the medical establishment voiced its dissent. Doctor Harry J. Haiselden outed himself and his eugenic practices not only in print, newspapers and scholarly journals, but also in a new popular medium, in film. Haiselden produced the first eugenic motion picture; a silent entitled *TheBlack Stork,* which featured the case of withholding treatment from a newborn with severe birth defects. Pernick used this film as a throughline for his book *TheBlack Stork*: . . . (1996), and much of his investigative work hinges on the events depicted in this film (see fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Advertisement for The Black Stork published in the Chicago Herald Tribune on Apr. 1, 1917 Source: www.npr.org (accessed May 5, 2009) Euthanasia ProCon.org. Web. 20 Mar. 2012.

The story of Haiselden's exploitation of the Bollinger Baby: On Saturday, November 12, 1915, Anna Bollinger gave birth to a seven-pound baby boy who was diagnosed by Dr. Harry J. Haiselden, the surgeon who headed Chicago's German American Hospital staff, to be too deformed to live. Haiselden refused the newborn treatment (Pernick 3). Haiselden went public by notifying the press, ostensibly to promote the eugenics cause, admitting to refusing treatment. "[H]e had secretly permitted many other infants he diagnosed as 'defectives' to die during the decade before 1915. And over the next three years, he withheld treatment from, or actively speeded the deaths of, at least five more abnormal babies" (Pernick 4). An immediate outcry ensued. An article in *The New York Times*, on Thursday, November 18, 1915, less than a week after the birth and death of Baby Bollinger, voiced concern for a possible backlash to the eugenic practices of Haiselden: "The public, aroused by the case, may force and investigation by the authorities. . . . Dr. George L. Lipschulch, a member to the Legislature, announced that he would appear before the State Board of Health and ask that Dr. Haiselden's license to practice medicine be taken from him" (Defective). Haiselden was not alarmed by accusations brought against him; after all, he was the expert and head of hospital staff at Chicago's German-American Hospital. He was one of Plato's magistrates, one of the ruling class, and out for the public good. Despite the threats, no charges were filed.

Haiselden, in projectable version of *TheBlack Stork* (1916) that Pernick found in a private collection, exploits the thinly veiled Bollenger Baby as an example of the need to refuse treatment for defective newborns. As the filmic representation of the Bollenger Baby dies, via silent-era special effects, a ghostly Christ enters the room.

The soul of the infant, having been mercifully liberated from a short but tormented life by the grace of Dr. Dickey (Haiselden) rises up from its deathbed and enters the arms of Jesus and everlasting life in Heaven (see fig. 3). Haiselden has presented himself and his eugenic practice as part of the divine plan of salvation. He is doing the Lord's work. Whether he actually believed this sanctimonious visual rhetoric or not we can only guess. The impact of these images on the theatergoer must have been strong. Imagine the sound of an organ, or even an orchestra in the pit of a high-end theatre in any big city in the nation.

Fig. 3. Still from The Black Stork - Baby's soul welcomed by Jesus, 1917 version of the film. Google Images. Web. 20 Mar. 2012.

Then came the backlash from the Chicago medical establishment. The film proved Haiselden to be too much the self-promoter and a danger to the medical profession. On March 14, 1916, the Chicago Medical Society voted to expel Haiselden "based 'not on the fact that the physician did not operate on the baby, but because he permitted [the case] to be published . . . in a daily newspaper [and to be] exploited in moving picture shows' [brackets in original]" (NYT in Pernick 117). Interestingly, the Chicago Medical Society's dissent was not for Haiselden's practice, but for his failure to keep "*these proceedings . . . secret from all but the magistrates themselves"* as Socrates warns in *The Republic*. The magistrates in this case are members of the Chicago Medical Society. Their dissent appears to have been more concerned with the image of the medical profession than with the life of a newborn.

Within a year of Haiselden going public in newspapers and film, Professor Franz Boas of Columbia University spoke out against eugenics from an anthropologist's perspective. In an article entitled "Eugenics" published in the November 1916 edition of *The Scientific Monthly*, Boas questions the methods of eugenic breeding of humans and seems to be speaking in response to the film *Black Stork*. My evidence that Boas, in his article, is in conversation with Haiselden and the film includes the timeline, the diction, and the rhetoric he uses. In the first paragraph of his article, Boas takes up Haiselden's religious theme and speaks to the fervor that borders on proselytizing of those advocating eugenic practice: "The possibility of raising the standards of human physique and mentality by judicious means has been *preached* for years by the *apostles* of eugenics, and has taken hold of the public mind to such an extent that eugenic measures have even found a place on the statute books of a number of states [emphasis mine]"[9] (471). The first word choice that strikes me in this quote is "judicious," which reminds of Plato's "lawgivers" and "magistrates" in *The Republic*.

That the "apostles" of eugenics have "preached" the possibility of "raising the standards of human physique and mentality" is a pretty accurate depiction of the manner in which eugenics theory did "[take] hold of the public mind" (471) and is a seeming jab at the *sanctimonia* of Haiselden's self image. By judicious diction (now I'm doing it) and without explicitly saying so, Boas frames his opposition as quasi-religious zealots. By combining Boas' frame with the words of Galton as quoted by Carter — that eugenic selection in marriage "will be required by the national conscience, and will become an orthodox religious tenet" (see above, 7) — one can see how these voices seem to be, consciously or unconsciously, in conversation.

Boas, having framed the way he wants his opposition to be read, moves forward by agreeing that the high ideals of eugenics are beautiful — raising humanity up and eliminating suffering — and that with "appropriate selection" certain traits can be reproduced in humans just as with the breeding of livestock, "provided that man allows himself to be selected in the same manner as we select animals" (471). Here we have Boas touching briefly the two erroneous assumptions of Plato found in my epigraph above — that lawgivers and magistrates would know what is best for the common good, and that the alienation of personal liberty would be for the public good via *dictum cubiculum.*

Boas takes up the social argument, as did Milum three years previously, albeit through the lens of anthropology. Given that with appropriate selection hereditable traits could be engineered to raise the human species for the common good and the less desirable traits lessened or eliminated, one would first have to determine what traits are hereditable. Boas argues that the eugenist is too ready to attribute the diversity of human traits to nature rather than nurture. Again we see the erroneous assumption that existential social effects are taken by eugenists to be inherently essential conditions. Boas calls for a closer look at environmental/existential conditions: "We know that poor people develop slowly and remain short of stature as compared to wealthy people. We may find, therefore, in a poor area, apparently a low hereditary stature, that, however, would change if the economic life of the people were changed" (472). Human beings, more so perhaps than any other specie, are limited by their environment but do adapt, and, "unless the contrary can be proved, we must assume that all complex activities are socially determined, and not hereditary . . . without influencing the in the least the hereditary characteristics of the individuals concerned" (472). And how complex is the activity of living in an economically depressed social environment?

Along with their essentialist assumptions, the eugenists' obsession with rationality troubled Boas. In general, human beings are governed largely by their emotions and not by state mandated rational design, as eugenists would prefer. Love and sex are not rational behaviors. As Boas aptly states:

> It is, therefore, exceedingly unlikely that a rational control of one of the strongest emotional passions of man could ever succeed. If even in matters of minor importance evasion of the law is of common occurrence, this would be infinitely more common in questions that touch our inner life so deeply. The instinctive repugnance against eugenic legislation is based on this feeling. (475)

Boas' operating assumption in this statement is the seemingly irrationality of humans to evade the law.

Interesting that Boas uses the word "evade" rather than break. It is as if he is saying that in decisions highly charged with emotion, people don't think consciously of "breaking" a law but simply evading it. But hold on. Perhaps it is not a conscious evasion by a subject who is in a highly charged emotional state, but that the law itself evades acknowledgement by the subject.

The thread of eugenic discourse — by both professors and dissenters — runs a not-so-winding course from Plato to the present. Carter, unnamed author, Individualist, Milum, and Boas all take on the Plato's fallacious assumptions, and his fallacies of premise and common cause, in one form or another: some forwarding and extending the arguments of the others. Some concentrate on the problem of expression of individual liberty in selection of mate and freedom from interference by agencies of authority, others debate existential social effects as opposed to essential heredity, but all speak in response to the conversation started by Plato through the voices of Socrates and Glaucon in the creation of the ideal Republic. That these individuals talk to each other is, to me, obvious by their rhetorical choices of diction and logical argument. It is perhaps only because this discourse was made public, thanks in part to the self-promotion of Dr. Harry J. Haiselden, and later the National Socialist party of Adolph Hitler, that the horrors of eugenic theory in practice didn't remain private knowledge as Socrates advised Glaucon that it should.

In this essay I've limited my discussion to those voices of dissent from the beginning of eugenic legislation in the United States by starting my search with Carter in 1907 and ending with Boas in 1916. In future work I will examining *The Republic of Plato* (Davies & Vaughan trans.: the definitive version of late 19th early 20th centuries) in more depth. I will take into account Plato's possible irony in the voice of Socrates, as he later baulks at engaging in dialectic with Thrasymachus and Glaucon in regards the breeding of female guardians (Republic V) as object of Socrates' reticence is picked up and explored by those opposed to eugenics in the early 20th century. In the early stages of eugenics opposition, the voices were of men; however, there were women who spoke out against eugenics in theory and practice as well. Much work lies ahead in exploring the many voices apposing eugenics in the 20th century and even before.

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Endnotes

[1] Galton, Francis. "Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development." 1883.

[2] I am reminded here of the word "pharmakon" as Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* uses it: the medicine that is also a poison. Derrida delves into the use of "pharmakon" in his work, "Plato's Pharmacy" (1972).

[3] In 2007, the Indiana Historical Bureau, Indiana University, and Indiana University Foundation placed an historic marker on the east lawn of the Indiana State Library, 140 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana. Side one of the marker: "By late 1800s, Indiana authorities believed criminality, mental problems, and pauperism were hereditary. Various laws were enacted based on this belief. In 1907, Governor J. Frank Hanly approved first state eugenics law making sterilization mandatory for certain individuals in state custody. Sterilizations halted 1909 by Governor Thomas R. Marshall." Side two: "Indiana Supreme Court ruled 1907 law

unconstitutional 1921, citing denial of due process under Fourteenth Amendment. A 1927 law provided for appeals in the courts. Approximately 2, 500 people in state custody were sterilized. Governor Otis R. Bowen approved repeal of all sterilization laws 1974; by 1977, related restrictive marriage laws repealed" (Indiana Historical Bureau).

[4] This idea of the children of the wealthy being hindered by their supposed advantages reminds me of the ideas behind integration of public schools — that exposure to diversity may be an advantage occluded to the wealthy.

[5] That is, legislation of bedroom behavior.

[6] I can only guess why Individualist and the previous author chose not to give their names. Perhaps because of professional affiliation and threat of censure. Individualist is mentioned by another author in a book on the subject of eugenics published in 1922 — further evidence that these writers are engaged in discourse with each other.

[7] James Arthur Balfour, 1st Earl of Balfour, Conservative politician and Prime Minister of Great Britain from1902 to1905.

[8] The terms "racist" and "racism" first entered the English language, according to the OED, in 1926, and were associated with "German Nationals" and first published in the *Manchester Guardian.*

[9] By 1916, May 4th to be exact, Michigan was the tenth state to enact eugenic sterilization laws. (Laughlin, Chap. 1, 1-4)